

**Amendments to the Claims:**

1. (previously presented) An expression cassette, characterized in that said expression cassette comprises a promoter obtainable from the region between the stop codon of the *yyaF* gene and the start codon of the *rpsF* gene as found on the *Bacillus subtilis* genome.
2. (previously presented) An expression cassette, characterized in that said expression cassette comprises a promoter having the following characteristics
  - a) a nucleotide sequence TATAAT, preferably GTATAAT or TATAATA at the -10 site,
  - b) a nucleotide sequence TTGTAA, preferably GTGTAA or TTGTAAA at the -35 site,
  - c) a spacer of 17 +/- 2 nucleotides, preferably 17 +/- 1 nucleotides, more preferably 17 nucleotides.
3. (previously presented) The expression cassette according to claim 1, characterized in that the promoter comprises the nucleotide sequence as depicted in SEQ ID NO 1.
4. (currently amended) The expression cassette according to claim 1[[,]], characterized in that the promoter comprises the nucleotide sequence as depicted in SEQ ID NO 2.
5. (previously presented) The expression cassette according to claim 1, characterized in that the promoter comprises the nucleotide sequence as depicted in SEQ ID NO 3.
6. (previously presented) The Expression cassette according to Claim 1, characterized in that the promoter is preceded by a stretch of nucleotides having at least 1, preferably 2, more preferably even three AT-rich regions upstream of the -35 region.
7. (previously presented) The expression cassette according to claim 6, characterized in that said stretch of nucleotides having AT-rich regions upstream of the -35 region comprises the

nucleotide sequence as depicted in SEQ ID NO 4, preferably in SEQ ID NO 5, more preferably in SEQ ID NO 6.

8. (currently amended) An expression cassette, characterized in that said expression cassette comprises a promoter having a consensus sequence AAAANNNNNNTTTX<sub>n</sub>AAAAANNNNNNTTTT (SEQ ID NO: 16), wherein  $10 < n < 150$ .

9. (previously presented) The expression cassette according to claim 8, characterized in that the promoter comprises the nucleotide sequence as depicted in SEQ ID NO: 7, preferably in SEQ ID NO: 8, more preferably in SEQ ID NO: 9.

10. (previously presented) Recombinant plasmid characterized in that said plasmid comprises an expression cassette according to Claim 1.

11. (previously presented) Bacterial host cell comprising an expression cassette according to Claim 1 or a recombinant plasmid according to claim 10.

12. -14. (Cancelled)

15. (previously presented) A method for the heterologous expression of a gene, characterized in that said method comprises the transfection of a bacterium with an expression cassette according to Claim 1.